

# Basic Communication Course Annual

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Volume 2

Article 2


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1990

## Dedication

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### Recommended Citation

Schliessman, Michael R. (1990) "Dedication," *Basic Communication Course Annual*: Vol. 2 , Article 2.  
Available at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcca/vol2/iss1/2>

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## **DEDICATION**

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How I envied that beard. Long, straight, black, with a hint of gray, and dominating.

First impressions, as any speech teacher will tell you, are likely to be lasting ones. My first impression of Norm Watson remains – that beard. This impression was made moments before the commanding, compassionate voice said, "Hi, I'm Norm Watson from the University of South Dakota." A speech voice – and a great beard.

Norm and I met under these circumstances during the first Speech Communication Association of South Dakota annual convention that he attended. It's been a few years since then. Norm's activities in his professional associations were clearly shown during his first weeks in South Dakota. We know Norm's activity in the profession spanned state, regional and national groups. That first day, Norm and I made ties that continue past his death. A few hours with Norm that day opened my eyes to the speech profession. And in those few hours, I gained a friend that I will *never* forget.

Norm "took" me to my first Midwest Basic Course Directors' Conference – at Ames, Iowa. Actually, I drove, but I was really his guest. Our trip that February is etched in my mind – snow, wind, blowing snow and ice. The Amana Colonies Holiday Inn was an oasis to the ice desert travelers. Yet it was an unknown oasis for me, because I had not attended this conference before. A few hours under Norm's tutelage erased all anxiety about the conference and the group. Professional relationships like ours can grow quickly into more than that. Ours certainly did. Though we

might not talk to each other for long periods of time, when we did it was as if yesterday had been the last time. When we needed to crowd into hotel rooms which wouldn't give us a rollaway bed, Norm slept on the floor. When mornings brought inadequate motivation, Norm dug into a meticulously packed small suitcase and brought out a coffee pot. (Norm taught me how to pack one bag for a long weekend trip.) Norm found the pier when we wanted lobster.

I doubt my experiences with Norm are unique. Norm Watson made people feel special. It wasn't that he made people feel like they were special speech educators. It was that he made people *feel special*. Each of us who knew Norm know this – that deep down in us is a part of him. Norm seemed to bring this to the surface. He gave for us, to us; and became part of us.

The mind is a betrayer. I can remember the pier, the coffee, the bed on the floor. I can remember Norm as if he were staring back at me. Despite all the speech communication education, words cannot express the memories. There's only a snippet of a thought to convey to those of you who did not know Norm, the kind of person he was.

You can find a part of Norm in his writings. His texts, his papers, all show a concern Norm had for his profession and his students. Norm could attend to the detail of planning a conference, and then write eloquently about teaching students the necessity of involvement in life by thinking critically about their experiences. Norm's legacy to the profession can touch you who did not know him. Norm Watson was primarily instrumental in giving the Basic Course Committee credibility in the Speech Communication Association. That legacy continues with the publication of this *Annual*.

The emptiness was surpassed by grief, which is slowly fading. Sadness still lingers and will, but I sense grief will continue to fade. In time, both will be truly tempered by remembering the "good ol' days." Perhaps they were not that

good; but the memories are. At each convention or conference, over coffee or dinner, Norm Watson will be remembered. Dedication to this *Annual* will remind us of Norm, but our personal memories will etch Norm permanently onto us. For I believe his legacy is part of each of us who knew him, and of those who didn't. Those of us who knew Norm share a family spirit in his loss and in his memories.

Our profession and personal loss can only approximate the loss to Norm's true family. To his memory, we dedicate this *Annual* to Norman H. Watson.

Mike Schliessmann  
Brookings, South Dakota  
July, 1990